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Collaborative marketing for the sustainable development of community-based tourism enterprises: voices from the field

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines stakeholder engagement in the collaborative marketing of community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs). The study explored the various collaborative marketing approaches shaped by diverse stakeholders' perspectives on ways to achieve the sustainable development of CBTEs in Vietnam. The results of 30 in-depth, semi-structured interviews from three CBTEs in Vietnam showed that three collaborative marketing approaches were prevailed among CBTE stakeholders and were categorised as commercial viability-driven, community development-driven and balanced approaches. The approaches' differences were reflected in the marketing objectives to achieve CBTE sustainability, the central linkages of CBTE collaborative marketing, and the facilitators of stakeholder collaboration. The research found a knowledge gap between researchers and research participants and divergent perspectives among different categories of research participants regarding marketing and CBTE sustainability. This paper implies the role of a knowledge co-production approach to drive the stakeholder engagement in CBTE collaborative marketing for CBTEs' long-term success. Additionally, this study provides insights into the discussion of marketing for sustainable tourism. Furthermore, the findings contribute to a better understanding of the collaborative approach at the organisational level.

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Community-based tourism enterprises; collaborative marketing; knowledge gap; sustainability; Vietnam

Introduction

It is contended that community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs) possess the potential to create jobs for locals, diversify the sources of livelihoods, offer additional income, facilitate the community's empowerment, and contribute to conservation efforts (Kibicho, 2008; Lemelin, Koster, & Youroukos, 2015; Sakata & Prideaux, 2013). Due to such promising objectives, numerous CBTE projects have been proliferating in less developed countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Carlisle, Kunc, Jones, & Tiffin, 2013; Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen, & Duangsaeng, 2014; Mielke, 2012). However, the majority of those CBTEs collapse after the funded period (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Rocharungsat, 2008; Weaver, 2010). Among other reasons, poor market access is consistently blamed for the business failure of CBTEs (Dixey, 2008; Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2016; Häusler, 2008; Mielke, 2012). Nevertheless, few commercially successful CBTEs are criticised of not addressing community development objectives in their business success (Manyara & Jones, 2005; Snyman, 2014). Those CBTEs mostly owe their commercial success to joint-venture partnerships between them and tour operators, in which the private

partner takes charge of the CBTE marketing (Lucchetti & Font, 2013; Snyman, 2012; Van Der Duim & Caalders, 2008). Although the topic of marketing has been reiteratively cited in the literature of CBTE assessment, surprisingly, the study of CBTE marketing and business sustainability has not been closely examined.

Stakeholder collaboration and partnerships are consistently touted as being among the indicators of CBTE success and are well addressed through academic studies and the “grey” literature (Asker, Boronyak, Carrard, & Paddon, 2010; Dodds et al., 2016; Lucchetti & Font, 2013). However, there is still a lack of research investigating how CBTE collaborative marketing promotes business sustainability for CBTEs. This study aims to address this gap by examining stakeholder engagement in collaborative marketing efforts for the sustainable development of CBTEs in Vietnam. In particular, this investigation employs a constructivist approach to knowledge to (1) investigate CBTE stakeholders’ perspectives on CBTE sustainability that affect their proposals of CBTE collaborative marketing and (2) identify stakeholder inclusion, central linkages, and facilitators included in the proposed collaborative marketing approaches. The paper implies the role of a knowledge co-production approach to drive stakeholder engagement in CBTE collaborative marketing for CBTEs’ long-term success. Additionally, this paper provides insights to the discussion of marketing for sustainable tourism. Furthermore, the findings contribute to a better understanding of the collaborative approach at the organisational level. The research outcomes can be applied to other CBTE contexts, reflecting the practical contribution of this project.

Community-based tourism enterprises

A CBTE is an enterprise-based approach to a community-based tourism (CBT) initiative in support of entrepreneurship to achieve sustainable development. Three main criteria identify a CBTE: local community ownership of the venture; full community involvement in the venture’s operation and management; and the community as the main beneficiary of the initiative (Spenceley, 2008). In developed countries such as Australia (Damien, 2016; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2014) and Canada (Lemelin et al., 2015), a CBTE is regarded as an “Aboriginal/Indigenous tourism business”. The term CBTE predominantly appears in organisations in Africa and Latin America (Armstrong, 2012; Jones, 2008; Manyara & Jones, 2007). As the term CBTE is used in reference to operations in less developed countries, it is adopted in this research.

Marketing and the sustainable development of CBTEs

The sustainable development of CBTEs refers to an attainment of commercial viability combined with the fulfilment of non-economic indicators of success. Specifically, CBTEs are deemed to achieve sustainable development if they balance the realisation of economic benefits for locals with cultural and environmental preservation, and fundamentally identify themselves as a tool for promoting the social, cultural, and place characteristics of the community (Carr, Ruhanen, & Whitford, 2016). It is argued that stakeholders engaging in CBTE development should be aware of and acknowledge the fundamental principles of CBTE sustainability. The stakeholders’ interventions, if not guided by evidence-based knowledge, might cause adverse impacts in the long term (Ruhanen, 2008).

The assessment of the sustainable development of CBTEs is subject to different perspectives. CBTE stakeholders define the long-term success of CBTEs differently depending on their own understanding of the concept (Lai, Li, & Scott, 2015). Additionally, there is a conflict over the meaning of the key terms relating to CBTEs and their sustainability. Medina (2005) describes a disagreement among Belizean ecotourism stakeholders and between them and foreign experts regarding the definitions of “locals”, “benefits”, and “participants” to certify a business as ecotourism. At a different scale, Higgins-Desbiolles, Trevorrow, and Sparrow (2014) argue that there are inconsistencies between Western perspectives and Indigenous viewpoints regarding what constitutes the “success” of an Aboriginal business in Australia. Discrepancies in the many definitions of sustainable CBTE cause disparities in

assessing CBTE success. Indeed, Taylor (2016), in a study of a CBT project in a rural Mayan village in Yucatan, Mexico, indicates inconsistencies in the project assessment between the project planners and the affected community due to their different perceptions of the success indicators.

Additionally, different stakeholders assess CBTEs with reference to pre-identified conceptual references. For instance, SNV, a Netherlands-based development organisation, specifying poverty alleviation as the benchmark for achieving sustainable tourism initiatives, generated a set of metrics for its projects (Hummel, Gujadhur, & Ritsma, 2013). Ruhanen (2013) argues that the government, although assumed to be an impartial stakeholder in sustainable tourism development, actually overemphasises commercial interests. Local entrepreneurs engage in tourism business activities with a focus on economic incentives (Novelli & Gebhardt, 2007; Truong, Hall, & Garry, 2014), which consequently affect their interpretation of business success. The pre-identified assumptions of one stakeholder might be inconsistent with those of the other stakeholders in the assessment of CBTE success. Therefore, we argue that all stakeholders engaging in a CBTE collaborative marketing project must embrace a common understanding of what constitutes the sustainable development of CBTEs.

Marketing is regarded as significantly impacting the achievement of CBTE sustainability. This approach fits into a broader debate about the power of organisational marketing, beyond its economic benefits, to influence other objectives of the entrepreneurship for the sustainable development of a tourism business (Gilmore, Carson, & Ascenção, 2007; Mitchell, Wooliscroft, & Higham, 2010; Pomeroy, Noble, & Johnson, 2011). Indeed, numerous studies argue that marketing has the potential to balance dichotomous objectives in tourism management to achieve sustainable development (Buhalis, 2000; Donohoe, 2012; Sharpley & Pearce, 2007). Particularly in those CBTEs aiming to achieve both commercial viability and community development objectives, the marketing tools utilised for economic objectives need to be harmonised with their impacts on non-economic objectives. However, there is a paucity of studies investigating the potential of marketing for sustainability in the realm of CBTEs. Thus, we attempt to address the paucity by investigating the attainment of CBTE sustainability through the lens of marketing.

CBTE marketing partnerships

The CBTE literature defines the stakeholders of CBTEs. A stakeholder is “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by, the achievement of a corporation’s purpose” (Freeman, 1984, p. 25). Specifically, tour operators are considered essential stakeholders of CBTE development because of their market expertise and experience (Snyman, 2014; Van Der Duim & Caalders, 2008). Tour operators act as facilitators, marketing intermediaries, and product development advisors for CBTE development (WTO, 2002). The tourism literature also contains frequent mentions of non-economic stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community associations, marketing social enterprises, and CBTE networks, involved in CBTE development (Dodds et al., 2016; Forstner, 2004). Table 1 summarises the stakeholders who may be involved in a CBTE development and their potential marketing supports.

Stakeholder collaboration is important to CBTE development, particularly in marketing. In the rural and peripheral regions of less developed countries, local communities demonstrate very little knowledge of the tourism market, tourist demands, and tourism business (Mitchell & Muckosy, 2008). The CBTEs initiated in those regions also encounter physical and cultural isolation from tourists (Dixey, 2008; Forstner, 2004; Goodwin, 2006). Furthermore, the small scale of CBTEs prevents them from being sufficiently financed for marketing purposes (Sakata & Prideaux, 2013). The poor marketing capability of the local entrepreneurs, exacerbated by the remoteness and limited resources of the entrepreneurship, challenges the CBTEs to market their business independently. Indeed, numerous studies argue that there is a need for external marketing assistance for CBTEs (Notzke, 2004; Sakata & Prideaux, 2013). Engaging with other stakeholders not only endows CBTEs with collaborative advantages but also makes up for CBTEs’ lack of business skills and financial resources (Dixey, 2008; Moscardo, 2008).

Table 1. Stakeholders in relationship with a CBTE.

Stakeholders	Potential marketing support	References
Private companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include marketing intermediaries who link local entrepreneurs and the market, particularly international markets • Provide additional financial support to form co-management partnerships 	Snyman (2014); Van Der Duim and Caalders (2008); WTO (2002)
NGOs/development agencies/donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for technical training and capacity building • Seek to promote fair trade arrangement • Facilitate partnerships between CBTEs and other stakeholders 	Forstner (2004); Hummel and Van Der Duim (2012); Kennedy and Dornan (2009); Zhuang, Lassoie, and Wolf (2011)
Community-designated associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist members with marketing, product development and distribution • Offer assistance in legislation, collective bargaining power improvement, training and education, and environmental monitoring through joint effort 	Carlisle et al. (2013); Clarke (2004); Tolkach and King (2015)
Local authorities/policy-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate infrastructure improvement • Assist in policy frameworks • Provide CBTEs with market information 	Forstner (2004); Manyara and Jones (2005)
Social enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Function as marketing intermediaries • Facilitate knowledge exchange among stakeholders 	Von der Weppen and Cochrane (2012); Phi, Whitford, and Dredge, (2016)

Notably, multiple stakeholder collaborations, rather than dyadic relations, are argued to better promote the sustainable development of CBTEs (Asker et al., 2010; Manyara & Jones, 2005). It is argued that the objectives of commercial viability and community development for CBTE sustainability cannot be successfully addressed by dyadic partnerships. For instance, joint venturing between a CBTE and a tour operator can significantly leverage for market access for CBTEs, but their ability to contribute to community well-being is still in doubt (Manyara & Jones, 2005). Likewise, an NGO's sponsorship of a CBTE, aimed at community empowerment, gender equality and other non-economic priorities, might unsuccessfully offer market-ready products (Mielke, 2012; Zapata, Hall, Lindo, & Vanderschaeghe, 2011). The potential benefits of collaborative linkages, combined with the dual objectives for CBTE long-term success, advocate for CBTE collaborative marketing approaches that involve a wide range of stakeholders. In such marketing approaches, the objectives of tourism prosperity, community empowerment, and self-sustainable CBTEs can be equitably promoted (Carlisle et al., 2013; Manyara & Jones, 2005; Mbaiwa, Stronza, & Kreuter, 2011).

In contrast to the extensive discussion identifying potential marketing supports of CBTE stakeholders and establishing the significance of a collaborative approach, the topic of how stakeholders might collaborate to support CBTEs on issues such as marketing is still under-researched. Exceptionally, few studies emphasise the importance of a partnership-based approach to respond to the marketing challenges of enterprises (Dodds et al., 2016; Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2014). At a different scale of the study, few studies assess the ability of a collaborative approach at the operational level of CBTEs to achieve business sustainability. Iorio and Corsale (2014) explore the potential benefits of a network of diverse actors in fostering CBTEs in a village in Romania. The study's findings imply the importance of the local leader connecting CBTEs with external stakeholders. Tolkach and King (2015), through a case study of Timor-Leste, stress the process of generating a national-level network of CBTEs. These authors argue that a CBT network can support CBTEs in overcoming challenges, including marketing issues. These studies affirm the crucial importance of a CBTE collaborative network and unlock critical factors affecting the successful process of connecting CBTEs and external stakeholders. However, these studies still fail to investigate how such a collaborative network could tackle a particular challenge of CBTEs. This paper adds insights to the discussion of a collaborative approach and CBTEs by including multiple stakeholders engaged in the development of a collaborative marketing approach for the sustainable development of CBTEs.

Setting the scene: CBTEs and their sustainable development in Vietnam

Located within the context of a less-developed and communist country, the development of CBTE initiatives in Vietnam is closely aligned with the regulations of the central government and is designed to meet anti-poverty objectives. Specifically, CBTEs are facilitated to address the objective of poverty alleviation that is promoted by the government. In the national socio-economic development strategy for the period 2001–2010, the tourism industry was initially integrated into the national goal of accelerating economic development for poverty reduction (Truong, 2013). This change in the legal environment facilitated the inauguration of CBTE projects in the early 2000s in rural and mountainous regions. A different aspect of the study context recognises that the political economy pertaining to the cumbersome administrative procedures, the corruption, bureaucratisation of officials, and lack of a well-designed rule of law have remarkably characterised CBTE development in Vietnam (Bennett, 2009; ESRT, 2013; Vuong, 2014). The power of the government combined with ineffective performance in CBTE development arguably affects the nature of CBTE collaborative marketing in Vietnam.

CBTE development in Vietnam is also subject to interventions by international development agencies and NGOs. With encouragement from the Vietnamese government, a number of development agencies and NGOs have been allowed to engage in CBTEs for pro-poor objectives. Since the initial CBT project funded by SNV in Sapa in 2001 (Oostveen, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2003), numerous donor-funded CBTEs have been initiated in various remote regions of Vietnam.

In addition to international donor-funded CBTEs, many self-funded CBTEs, some of which are supported by local NGOs or tour operators, have recently burgeoned in rural regions of Vietnam. General themes of these CBTEs include the initiation of business oriented to the tourism market and the increase in income as a catalyst for social impact (Nguyen, 2016). However, the sustainable development of such CBTEs is currently challenged by a lack of strategic planning and monitoring tools (Khoi, 2017). The shortage of a comprehensive strategy regarding the sustainable development of CBTEs is argued to affect the development of a CBTE collaborative marketing for sustainability in Vietnam.

In contrast to the increasing development of CBTEs in Vietnam, the current literature on the topic is largely scarce and divergent. Most of the knowledge available is interpreted in the “grey” literature (e.g. NGO reports, government documents and local news). However, the press censorship (Cain, 2014) can be an obstacle to the voicing of diverse viewpoints concerning CBTE development through the mass media. Likewise, NGO reports, although neutral from a political perspective, still adhere to their own organisational objectives in their CBTE evaluations (Hummel et al., 2013). Thus, their evaluations may be inconsistent with the viewpoints of other stakeholders. In contrast, the few exceptional academic studies investigating the topic of CBT in Vietnam predominantly prioritise “marginalised” voices (e.g. the community viewpoints) for their investigations (see Le, Weaver, & Lawton, 2012; Tran, 2014; Truong et al., 2014). Thus, there is still a paucity of studies embracing the voices of all the involved stakeholders in assessing the sustainable development of CBTEs in Vietnam. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating collaborative marketing approaches shaped by diverse stakeholders’ perspectives on ways to achieve the long-term success of CBTEs in Vietnam.

Methodology

Acknowledging diverse viewpoints and their values in understanding a problem, this study adopts a constructivist paradigm in its methodology. Constructivism, according to Guba (1990), admits the multiples of realities that exist in the minds of the “insiders”, and attempts to obtain one or more construction(s) that are reconciled from different perspectives. Due to the nature of the constructivist paradigm, Hollinshead (2006) argues that the paradigm is significant in investigating highly contextualised problem domains in which different worldviews co-exist and might be incongruent with each other.

Table 2. Summary of the three case studies.

Case study	Location	Characteristics
Triem Tay Floating Restaurant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Triem Tay Village, Quang Nam Province o 3 km from Hoi An City, a tourist centre o The village has been confronted with the out-migration issues due to land erosion^a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Was launched in June 2015 o Is owned by a Kinh^b family o Received support from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNESCO regarding technical training, field trips, marketing and promotion and so forth o Offers food and beverage packages and boating experience o Is a member of Triem Tay's CBTE co-operative,^c which was established in September 2015
Thanh Toan Gardening and Cookery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Thanh Toan Village, Thua Thien Hue Province o 8 km from Hue City, a tourist centre o The village is renowned for Thanh Toan Tile-Roofed Bridge, a National Heritage Site and a tourist attraction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Was established in 2012 o Is owned by a Kinh family o Used to be under the support of the Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA), SNV, followed by ILO and UNESCO o Includes gardening experience and cooking classes in its services o Currently in partnerships with 2–3 tour operators o Is a member of Thanh Toan's CBTE co-op
Minh Tho Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Mai Hich Village, Hoa Binh Province o 5 km from Lac Village – a renowned and arguably unsuccessful CBT destination in Vietnam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Is owned by a Thai^d family o Initiated in 2011 under the support of COHEDo Has recently received marketing support from CBT Travel^e o Offers homestay accommodation and other service packages (trekking, cultural performance, boating and biking)

COHED: Centre for Community Health and Development.

^a http://www.ilo.org/hanoi/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_456047/lang-en/index.htm, retrieved on 14th September 2017.

^b The Kinh people are the majority ethnic group of Vietnam.

^c The CBTE co-operative is a form of community alliances that specialises in tourism. This co-op is a community institution consisting of CBTEs as members and acting as a representative of the member entrepreneurs. Usually, a committee of selected members is responsible for the management of the co-op. In Vietnam, CBTE co-ops, similar to other communal cooperatives, are legally integrated into the over-arching Vietnam Cooperative Alliance, a non-profit organisation whose purpose is to support members through consulting, training, and providing a voice for policy change.

^dThe Thai people are one of the minority ethnic groups of Vietnam.

^eCBT Travel is a travel agency specialising in CBT products and services in Vietnam, self-labelled as a social enterprise. It initiates the CBT approach “franchised CBT”. Under this approach, CBT Travel facilitates a CBT initiative (mostly a homestay) equipped with standard facilities and services to fulfil travellers’ needs. The project is then handed over to local entrepreneurs through franchising partnerships in which CBT Travel takes in charge of sales, marketing and service quality control for the project. At the time of investigation, CBT Travel supported Minh Tho homestay in sales and marketing (see more in Phi et al., 2016).

Informed by a constructivist paradigm of knowledge, this study employs techniques of knowledge co-production. Knowledge co-production is “the collaborative process of bringing a plurality of knowledge sources and types together to address a defined problem and build an integrated or systems-oriented understanding of that problem” (Dale & Armitage, 2011, p. 440). A cornerstone of this approach is the consideration of the viewpoints of all potential stakeholders involved in CBTE collaborative marketing in addressing the research question. Concomitantly, this approach encourages the dialogue between the different viewpoints to achieve a compromise of perspectives and to facilitate social learning. The results presented in this paper represent the first stage of this joint learning process where different perspectives are investigated.

Three CBTEs were chosen for this study: Triem Tay Floating Restaurant in Triem Tay Village (Quang Nam), Thanh Toan Gardening and Cookery in Thanh Toan Village (Thua Thien Hue), and Minh Tho Homestay in Mai Hich Village (Hoa Binh). Table 2 presents the background information of the three CBTEs.

These case studies reflect a diversity of CBTE development and CBTE marketing approaches in Vietnam. Specifically, the three case studies represent the three typical factors regulating CBT sustainable development in Vietnam. The case of Triem Tay illustrates the intervention of CBT to address out-migration issues. CBT development in Thanh Toan Village encapsulates the tourism potential

Table 3. Interviewees per categories and case studies.

Categories of interviewees	Case study/Level of influence			
	Triem Tay Floating Restaurant	Thanh Toan Gardening and Cookery	Minh Tho Homestay	National/regional stakeholders
Tourism organisations	TO1	TO2	TO3; TO4; TO5	TO6; TO7
NGOs/Development agencies	DA1; DA2; NGO6	DA1; DA2	DA1; DA2	NGO3; NGO4; NGO5; NGO7
Local entrepreneurs	LE1	LE2	LE3; LE4	
CBTE co-operatives	Co-op1	Co-op2		
Local authorities	LA1	LA2		
Tourism government	TG1	TG2		TG3
Tourist suppliers at the destination	TS1			TS2
Other stakeholders (CBT guider/trainer/lecturer)	OS1	OS2		OS3
Total	10	8	7	9

from the travellers visiting Thanh Toan Tile-Roofed Bridge and disseminates the tourism benefits to locals. Likewise, the Minh Tho Homestay is among the CBTEs in the region dedicated to the objectives of sustainable poverty alleviation (i.e. increasing tourism-sourced income for the poor in conjunction with minimising the adverse impacts of tourism). All these CBTEs are located in rural and mountainous regions of Vietnam where agriculture is the main source of income. Tourism development in these areas is aimed at diversifying the livelihood options for the local community. With respect to marketing strategies, the Triem Tay Floating Restaurant seeks marketing assistance from the co-ops with extensions to the government, local tour operators, and NGOs. Comparatively, the Thanh Toan Gardening and Cookery is more independent in sales and marketing. The Minh Tho Homestay outsources its sales and marketing to CBT Travel. The different marketing strategies illustrate different approaches for CBTEs to engage in marketing opportunities in Vietnam.

In all, 30 interviewees were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods. First, key participants were identified through purposive sampling (Sekaran, 1992). This technique ensured that relevant participants were selected within a limited time frame and resulted in the selection of 21 participants from the three CBTEs. These participants were chosen because of their ongoing relationships with the proposed CBTEs and were, therefore, able to provide insights into the collaborative marketing of the three case studies. Then, within the catchment areas of the three case studies, through a snowball technique, nine additional participants were recommended by the key participants. The additional participants were recommended because of their experience in the development of CBTEs in Vietnam. Thus, these participants could provide a diversity of viewpoints on the research topic. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the study's participants by category and case study.

In-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews (Seidman, 2013) were conducted to collect information from the participants. The main objective of the interviews was to understand the participants' perceptions relating to stakeholder inclusion and to the facilitators of CBTE collaborative marketing as well as participants' perspectives on the sustainability of CBTEs.

Data collection occurred in Ha Noi, Hoa Binh, Hue, Da Nang, and Quang Nam (Vietnam) from November 2015 to January 2016. Twenty-eight interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, and two interviews were conducted in English. The interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim in the participants' own language. The data were then collated with the help of NVivo software. By coding the data by different categories, this computerised analysis tool helps researchers identify, index, and retrieve the data for analysis and evaluation more easily. Content analysis and paradigmatic narrative analysis were employed for the data analysis. On the one hand, content analysis is utilised in analysing textual data to generate rational conclusions (Grbich, 2012). In this study, content analysis was employed to identify the overt codes – that is, stakeholder inclusions, central relationships and facilitators in CBTE collaborative marketing. On the other hand, techniques of paradigmatic narrative analysis help themes to become apparent, either implicitly or explicitly, in a story and throughout stories

(Polkinghorne, 1995). Thus, it is helpful to clarify perspective-related themes in the responses of interview respondents. In particular, paradigmatic narrative analysis helped to identify power sources, legitimacy, and perspectives on CBTE collaborative marketing and the business sustainability.

Collaborative marketing approaches for the sustainable development of CBTEs

CBTE sustainability: three alternative marketing approaches

During the interviews, participants classified approaches to CBTE sustainability into three categories: (1) the commercial viability-driven approach, (2) the community development-driven approach, and (3) the balanced approach. Each approach is analysed individually in the subsections below.

The commercial viability-driven approach

The commercial viability-driven approach advocates that self-financing is a prerequisite objective of CBTE collaborative marketing to secure CBTE long-term success. Specifically, this approach focuses on the number of customer visits and income increases. NGO3 argued,

For fund approval, it is required by our head office [oversea] that the project proposal includes a chapter discussing strategies for sustaining the culture and environment in which the project is embedded. However, it is just quixotic. [...] The first thing we need to be concerned about is how to attract more visitors within a pre-determined timeframe of the project.

Another participant (TO4) said, "I do not care what CBT means. From the perspective of a tourism business, I only care how to bring profits for local entrepreneurs".

In turn, commercially viable ventures are seen as empowering the fulfilment of non-financial objectives. Specifically, the threats of fewer visitors and economic loss would force the community to preserve Indigenous culture and trigger the achievement of community development objectives. According to the experience of the same participant TO4,

They [the locals in Mai Hich village] have to keep [their village] clean as they know they will only have visitors if the village is clean [...] They have to wear traditional clothes, if not, [I] deduct 10,000 dong⁵⁽¹⁾ [from the revenue of every guest served by Mai Hich Homestay].

Additionally, the economic incentives from a commercially successful CBTE facilitate a change in the awareness of the locals. The changed awareness encouraged local entrepreneurs to invest their finances to run the CBTEs. The community's financial investment to CBTEs was considered as a crucial indicator of the business sustainability. Participant TO5 stated,

As the initial venture [Minh Tho Homestay] was so successful, the locals [in the village and neighbours] invested their money in running similar businesses. Here, it is vital that the locals learned by themselves and changed their awareness positively.

The community development-driven approach

At a different scale, the community development-driven approach establishes community resilience and community involvement as priorities in collaborative marketing initiatives. The community's resilience is reflected in the diverse sources of livelihood of which tourism is one part. It is crucial that the local entrepreneurs acknowledge their traditional sources of income while entering the tourism business. Participant TO1 commented,

The local community, which is made up of farmers, is the centre of CBT development models. Thus, to develop CBT development models sustainably, the farmers should keep their traditional jobs rather than convert to other jobs [...]. Once the local community appreciates the values of their traditional livelihoods for the society, CBT development models can be sustained.

The community's resilience is also reflected in the support of Indigenous culture and local traditions against the endogenous culture of visitors. Cultural resilience protects the traditional life of

locals from being degraded by streams of tourists. Additionally, a well-preserved local lifestyle is ultimately the main motivation of CBT tourists. Thus, local entrepreneurs should be aware that preserving their traditions is a sustainable way to develop their tourism business. A tour operator (TO2) stated, "The principle of CBT development is not exploitation. [...] It is a kind of slow investment. [...] The investment is aimed at remaining the normal life of the locals".

Additionally, participants emphasised the involvement of the whole community, rather than a few community members, in tourism activities as a way to achieve CBTE sustainability. The community involvement helps to share tourism opportunities equally, empower the community, promote community solidarity and widely deliver the benefits of tourism to the community. Accordingly, those CBTEs in which each community member had a stake were promoted:

Tourism initiatives are based on the community so that anyone should be able to participate, without any [barrier regarding financial] investments ... [so that] all community members can benefit from tourism (NGO5).

It was argued that the resilience, solidarity and empowerment of the community would be a prerequisite for the sustainable development of CBTEs. Participant NGO6 stated:

Once the community acknowledges their value, the idea of initiating tourism businesses to improve the income would be sustainable. The community would not exchange the community's values with economic incentives, as they know which one is worthier.

Accordingly, the community-oriented objectives would regulate marketing activities and economic indicators (i.e. product development, visitor numbers, and business profits). Particularly, it was suggested that CBTEs prioritise community values in their marketing strategies to overcome the paradox between "community" concept and "marketing" concept and the dilemma between poor local communities and relatively wealthier travellers. Participant TS1 stated,

[The concept of] community, on one hand, is attractive and easy to market, but, on the other hand, does not fit with the conventional concept of marketing [...]. If we try to connect poor locals with rich travellers by conventional marketing efforts, there will be a dead end. [...] [Because it can] indulge in illusions among the local community [...], urbanise the village [Triem Tay Village], and change the village fundamentally.

NGO5 advocated for an adoption of this approach, citing an example of a CBT project in Nam Giang District, Quang Nam Province, which follows the community development-driven approach.

As we offer single-day, packaged tours only, the community is not affected much [by tourists]. Thus, we have run [the CBT project] for three years [and] there are more than 1,000 visitors, nearly 100 tours, but the community values are still well preserved [against the adverse effects of tourism].

The balanced approach

In between the two-ended approaches above is the balanced approach. This approach seeks to balance commercial success with community development objectives in CBTE collaborative marketing instead of considering one objective at the expense of the other. The approach's advocates believe that this approach would promote more sustainable CBTEs. Sapa, one of the earliest CBT destinations in Vietnam, was used as an example to stress the significance of a balanced approach for long-term CBTE success. According to the participant TO7,

CBT development in Sapa currently [...] faces the issue of CBT supply exceeding CBT demand [...]. It leads to the break-up of supply-demand relationships and stakeholder partnerships [...], which consequently disappoints people [locals and stakeholders], and they now see the CBT in Sapa as ruined.

Thus, participant OS3 ascertained "Whatever you do, the customer's benefits and the community's values have to be in parallel. That is the best and most sustainable strategy for any CBTE".

Although this approach was perceived as ideal, it was also acknowledged as unrealistic, owing to a lack of metrics to gauge the CBTEs' sustainability. Specifically, all economic and non-economic

attributes are conceived to be important, but how and to what extent these attributes would be weighed are still unanswered. An example of the dilemma raised by this approach relates to the carrying capacity of the CBTEs. Participants agreed that the CBTEs' carrying capacity should be considered while attempting to attract visitors. However, participants offered no guidance as to how many visitors a CBTE should accommodate or how a CBT destination should reconcile visitors' experience and socio-cultural and environmental impacts on the destination. Participant TO7 stated,

We should not expect that visitors will flock [to the village] because of many reasons: locals, environment, and visiting travellers do not want to see many crowds. [...] Currently, we have signed a contract with a local representative in a village in Ha Giang [Vietnam] to have someone [from the community] take charge of the project. We groped for this strategy ourselves without instructions. Thus, we are not so confident, and I think neither are the NGOs.

Stakeholders' inclusion in CBTE collaborative marketing

Based on the approaches to CBTE sustainability, participants identified multiple stakeholders that need to be included in CBTE collaborative marketing. As participants perceived the CBTEs as incapable of independently undertaking entrepreneurship marketing activities, at least in their early developmental stages, they affirmed the engagement of multiple stakeholders to form a collaborative marketing approach. Accordingly, tour operators, NGOs, development agencies, local authorities, tourism governments, CBTE co-operatives, and local entrepreneurs are included in CBTE collaborative marketing.

Tour operators were perceived as powerful stakeholders in CBTE collaborative marketing. The position of tour operators in CBTE collaborative marketing appears to be derived from their intermediary roles in the CBTE distribution channels, their tourism expertise, and their financial resources. The intermediary position of tour operators is pivotal for the market access of a CBTE. According to participant OS1, tour operators were the only CBTE stakeholders to have access to international markets. On the domestic front, the intermediary role of tour operators was also essential until CBTEs achieve "a smooth operation and they have a steady source of customers" (OS1). Additionally, tour operators take advantage of tourism expertise and marketing experience to elevate the market access capability of the CBTE. TS4, a marketing manager of a tour operator, ascertained that "People know that they [CBTEs] are here [in Bhoong Village, a CBT destination that TS4's company promotes], basically because of our marketing". Tour operators are also able to provide some financial investment into the product development of a CBTE to help CBT products become marketable. "The financial shortage of the local entrepreneurs can be subsidised by us, the tour operators, who have advantages in finance and networks" (TO2). Thus, participant Co-op2 argued, "only tour operators can bring guests to us".

NGOs and development agencies in CBTE collaborative marketing are included because of their reputation, expertise in non-business aspects, and ability to provide financial support. Owing to these resources, NGOs and development agencies are conceived as development partners and community supporters in CBTE development. They offer financial and technical assistance to initiate CBTEs, undertake the training of entrepreneurs for capacity building, and connect CBTEs with other stakeholders. A tour operator (TO3) stated that it is the NGOs and development agencies who "instil expectations [of sales volume and economic benefits from tourism] for the locals". NGOs and development agencies, particularly those that are internationally recognised, are viewed as significantly regulating the CBTE marketing, as evidenced by participant TS1:

Triem Tay [village] may not have any outstanding [tourism] attractions [that appeal to] travellers. However, with the seal of UNESCO and ILO that are renowned international organisations, this village's attractions become valuable.

Political power validates the role of governments in CBTE collaborative marketing. Because of their legislative power, local governments are regarded as arbitrators in the collaborative marketing

efforts. In fact, their role in CBTE collaborative marketing is to control the implementation of stakeholder partnerships. Participant DA1 revealed that:

A contract of service between a tour operator and a community or co-op needs to be signed with a signature and seal of the local government. Given that it is only the local government [and neither the tour operator nor the development agency] who can monitor the community or the co-op in the implementation of the contract.

In the political context of Vietnam, a communist country, the relevance of government inclusion in CBTE collaborative marketing is particularly strong. The government has a certain prerogative to supervise business transactions. According to OS1, "In Vietnam, the government is involved in every activity. Particularly, tourism activities usually have to be aligned with the government's regulations". One NGO representative stated, "In relationships with local authorities, we need to gain credibility from them [...] so that they can trust our approach [...] and support us" (NGO5).

CBTE co-operatives' involvement in CBTE collaborative marketing is justified because of the perceived legitimacy of this stakeholder. Similar to other community-designated cooperatives, CBTE co-operatives are established to support their members in product development, marketing, and gaining a voice in policy changes. Particularly in the context of Vietnam, where most CBTEs are not registered as a business entity because of a reluctance to pay taxes and the micro scale of the operation, a legitimate CBTE co-operative becomes imperative in CBTE collaborative marketing. For example, the CBTE co-operative represents CBTE members in signing formal contracts with other stakeholders.

Apart from the general consensus among participants regarding the inclusion of crucial stakeholders in CBTE collaborative marketing, there was a divergence of perspectives on the proposals for central linkages and facilitators. The following subsection illustrates the different proposals in accordance with the different approaches for CBTE sustainability.

Central linkages and facilitators for CBTE collaborative marketing

Under the commercial viability-driven approach

The partnerships between a CBTE, a CBTE co-operative (optional), and tour operators are deemed to be paramount in CBTE collaborative marketing. Notably, partnerships between the CBTE and tour operators are considered crucial for the successful marketing of the CBTEs. Since tour operators are conduits linking the CBTE and the market, the participants indicated that they play an essential role in securing the CBTE's commercial viability. The engagement of tour operators in CBTE collaborative marketing ensures that the CBTEs' services satisfy the quality standards expected by the market. Participant DA1 argued, "The most challenging issue for the community is [...] the service quality. When we discuss this topic, the community and tourism corporations are indispensable actors".

In CBTE-tour operator marketing partnerships, the CBTE co-operatives can play the role of a CBTE representative, and act as a catalyst for the partnership of the CBTE and the tour operators. The involvement of the CBTE cooperative is particularly important in the infant stages of the CBTEs, in which the CBTEs are still vulnerable to the predatory motivations of private partners. The CBTE co-operatives, through their institutional authority and the support of the local authorities, can control the interventions of tour operators in the community. Additionally, the CBTE co-operatives can give infant CBTEs a voice to attract tour operators and help the tour operators become engaged in CBTE marketing. The CBTE co-operatives act as an alliance of CBTEs at a destination and provide tour operators with a variety of CBT products and services offered at the destination. Therefore, the presence of a CBTE co-operative, according to TO1, represents "better cost-cutting of marketing, a stronger voice power delivering from the marginalised community, the facilitation of business partnerships with tour operators until some individual CBTEs can market themselves, and the empowerment of the community". Furthermore, the CBTE cooperatives convey a sense of community benefits derived from the business activities of the CBTEs, which contributes to attracting a higher standard of corporate social responsibility from tour operators. A tour operator (TO3) stated,

If we [tour operators] see them [CBTEs] included in a community-based model for the community's benefit [a CBTE co-op for instance], we will put more effort into promoting them as we know the community can obtain benefits [from our endeavour].

Furthermore, CBTE co-operatives act as a tourism benefit distributor. These co-ops are authorised to manage the community funds derived from tourism activities and contributed by CBTE members. These funds are used for the benefit of the community by, for example, "visiting households and organising activities for children" (TO3). The management and distribution of funds are seen as a way to extend tourism's economic benefits to the whole community rather than to only the tourism entrepreneurs, thereby avoiding conflict between the local tourism entrepreneurs and the wider community. As TO3 noted, "the [community] fund is necessary so that not only tourism entrepreneurs can benefit from tourism activities but also the surrounding community members".

Accordingly, tour operators are argued to be the most appropriate facilitators of CBTE collaborative marketing. The position designation is aligned with the approach's crucial attention to the CBTE's market access. For tour operators committed to this facilitator role, various forms of contractual relationships are proposed. Specifically, tour operators can obtain privileged access to products in return for their commitment. Participant TG1 used the example of Tra Kieu Travel and the CBTEs of My Son Village (Quang Nam),

The CBTEs of My Son Village, represented by the CBTE co-op, signed a three-year-contract with Tra Kieu Travel. Under the contract, Tra Kieu Travel undertook marketing activities for the CBTEs in exchange for the exclusive right to exploit the CBTEs' products.

Under the community-driven approach

Relationships between CBTEs, through a CBTE co-operative and the government, and tour operators are proposed in CBTE collaborative marketing. The involvement of the CBTE co-operatives and the government in the partnerships between the CBTEs and the tour operators allows the economic benefits to be delivered fairly among the CBTEs as well as between them and the wider community. Additionally, this involvement promotes solidarity within the community, which results in the long-term relationships adhered in CBTE collaborative marketing and consequently in the sustainable development of the CBTEs. Participant NGO4 illustrated,

[Direct partnerships] between individual households and travel agencies is all right in [terms of] business perspective. But this is just [...] for the individual scale, not the community scale [...]. In the context of Vietnam, the local government's involvement in a management board of community [...] helps to obtain economic benefits from tourists and to share them with the locals.

Accordingly, participants commented on the potential of the government in facilitating the CBTE's marketing collaboration to monitor the private stakeholders' interventions. NGO4 said, "As an international organisation, we also ask for coordination from the government [...] Of course they are not so proactive in supporting the community, but they can control the travel agencies". A local authority (LA1) further said, "We are the only stakeholder who can build up vertical and horizontal connections with other governmental organisations for the marketing and promotion of CBTEs".

CBTE co-operatives are also able to facilitate CBTE collaborative marketing. As distinguished from the optional role of the CBTE co-operatives in the commercial viability-driven approach, the presence of a CBTE co-operative is required under this approach. Since CBTE co-operatives represent the community, their role in facilitating CBTE collaborative marketing is to ensure that adequate attention is paid to the non-economic attributes in the CBTEs' development.

As the management board of the CBTE co-operatives acknowledges the balance between tourism business and community development, they explain that principle to member CBTEs. [...] They take advantage of community resources to develop tourism activities, which consequently contribute to the community, for instance, in training members and supporting new product development. (NGO5)

Under the balanced approach

In conjunction with seeking a balance between the commercial viability and community development objectives in CBTE collaborative marketing, participants proposed the partnership of a CBTE, a CBTE co-operative, a social enterprise, and tour operators. The involvement of social enterprises and CBTE co-operatives is regarded as a way to secure community benefits from tourism activities while at the same time recognising the pivotal role of tour operators in gaining market access.

Using a long-term view, there needs to be an independent facilitator connecting the CBTEs and tour operators. [...] Such an independent facilitator can be a not-for-profit business or a social enterprise in which the community orientation is prioritised. (DA2)

The role of social enterprises as an independent facilitator in CBTE collaborative marketing was then suggested. Social enterprises possess certain features characterising them as an independent stakeholder in CBTE collaborative marketing. With their not-for-profit status, social enterprises can build non-business relationships with a CBTE, especially in community training and technical support. In this way, social enterprises probably obtain approval from the CBTE to be a CBTE representative. The manager of a self-defined social enterprise (NGO7) contended,

We define ourselves as an NGO while working with local stakeholders [...]. As an NGO, we aim to support minority groups, traditional artists and the disabled by increasing their income. Concomitantly, we focus on preserving traditional handicrafts and raising local and international awareness about traditional crafts and the culture of minority groups in Vietnam.

A concurrent possibility for social enterprises is to act as business entities in relationships with other stakeholders. Particularly in partnership with tour operators, social enterprises can be travel agencies or destination management companies. A tour operator noted, "We need an expert [at the destination] developing [CBT] products and delivering them to us" (TO3). Specifically, social enterprises were proposed to bridge the gap between infant CBTEs and the market through service quality management and networking, thereby contributing to a collaborative marketing approach for CBTE sustainability.

Marketing should be based on [service] quality. Once the service quality management certified by international standards is credited, it will fundamentally improve [the CBTE's strategic] marketing, and contribute to building a destination brand and attracting visitors. (DA2)

These dual attributes lead to the proposed facilitator role for social enterprises in CBTE collaborative marketing. However, the feasibility of this proposal raises concerns. The socio-economic conditions of a less developed country, Vietnam for instance, hinder the feasibility of the proposal. NGO4 commented, "In Vietnam, this type of this organisation does not exist [...] [because] they have no budget for this". A lack of policy challenges the transformation of the social enterprise concept into practice. Participant NGO7 stated,

Our organisation works for non-profit objectives and supports the most disadvantaged groups [women and disabled artists of minority ethnic groups] in the society [...]. However, we have confronted many challenges because we are not labelled a social enterprise [...]. We had to register two separate operational entities [i.e. NGO and trader] because there was no social enterprise law. Last November [11/2015], a term specifying social enterprises was finally added to the entrepreneurship law.

Additionally, there is a vague issue about the codes of conduct regulating the relationships between social enterprises and other stakeholders. Participant OS3 questioned, "What are their benefits [of being a facilitator for CBTE collaborative marketing]? [...] This is indeed a challenge as they always have to think how to balance community benefits and economic benefits".

Discussion

Power sources and perceptions of legitimacy arguably regulate stakeholder inclusion in CBTE collaborative marketing. The relationship-related attributes of stakeholders are thoroughly discussed in the

debate concerning inter-organisational collaboration (Beritelli & Laesser, 2011; Jamal & Stronza, 2009). Indeed, the attributes of power and legitimacy have been consistently utilised in assessing stakeholder inclusion in any collaboration (Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). This study adds insights to this discussion through the lens of CBTE collaborative marketing and within the context of a communist country. Particularly, in the study context of Vietnam, a communist country in which the central state still controls the nation's tourism industry (Michaud & Turner, 2017), political powers are stressed in defining stakeholder inclusion in CBTE collaborative marketing. The inclusion of the government stakeholders in CBTE collaborative marketing and their proposed role of collaboration facilitator under the community development-driven approach illustrate this argument. Additionally, the stakeholder's legitimacy is initially and mainly perceived concerning their legal authority. The legal status of CBTE co-operatives means they are perceived as being capable of representing the community, while the lack of legal status of social enterprises causes a reluctance regarding the feasible operations of social enterprises in CBTE collaborative marketing.

The linkage between marketing and CBTE sustainability is assessed in this study. On the one hand, this study argues for the potential of marketing to influence the achievement of CBTE sustainability (Gilmore et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 2010; Pomeroy et al., 2011). The inclusion of social enterprises and co-operatives in the balanced CBTE collaborative marketing approach exemplifies the argument. The importance of social enterprises in delivering community-based development and sustainability outcomes has been highlighted previously (Sakata & Prideaux, 2013; Von der Weppen & Cochrane, 2012). In this study, social enterprises were promoted for the role of facilitators who focus on marketing co-efforts to enable greater sustainable outcomes for CBTEs. Likewise, in CBTE collaborative marketing, CBTE cooperatives acted as the representatives of local entrepreneurs where legal authority was needed, the mediators connecting CBTEs and private corporations, and impartial distributors of tourism benefits to the wider community. The inclusion of CBTE co-operatives in CBTE collaborative marketing can be considered a response to the need for community institutions, which are crucial for the long-term development of CBTEs (Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan, & Luloff, 2010; Sakata & Prideaux, 2013; Tolkach & King, 2015). Accordingly, in the balanced approach, a sustainability-oriented marketing viewpoint prevails. On the other hand, the study reveals the conventional perception of CBTE stakeholders on marketing as an economic tool (Lane, 1994). The two-ended approaches for the sustainable development of CBTEs, as assessed in this study, illustrate the insight. In the study, the advocates of the commercial viability-driven approach argued for a demand-oriented marketing viewpoint. The demand-oriented marketing viewpoint defines the linkages between a CBTE and tour operators at the heart of CBTE collaborative marketing. In contrast, the supporters of the community development-driven approach argued for a supply-oriented marketing viewpoint in CBTE collaborative marketing. The supply-oriented marketing viewpoint was reflected through the government's role as a convenor to mitigate the adverse impacts of CBTE-tour operator linkages that hinder the attainment of community development objectives. The marketing perception as a conventional economic tool, which is the enemy of non-economic objectives, cannot result in the CBTE sustainability. The stories of poorly marketed CBTEs and unsustainably commercialised CBTEs in less developed countries concur with this argument.

There is a knowledge gap that emerged from this study. The gap in the realm of tourism sustainability has consistently risen (Ceron & Dubois, 2003; Ruhanen, 2008; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2010). In this study, the gap was illustrated by the lack of metrics that caused the impracticability of the balanced approach for a better CBTE sustainability. In contrast to extensive academic studies arguing for a holistic set of sustainability indicators for CBTEs (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Lemelin et al., 2015; Roberts & Tribe, 2008), practitioners in the social world, as shown in this study, still experience a lack of appropriate knowledge needed to guide their activities. The gap was also reflected in the perspectives on the attributes of sustainable CBTEs. Theoretically, the attributes of commercial viability and community development are different dimensions of CBTE sustainability, and for the most part, do not conflict (Carr et al., 2016; Dangi & Jamal, 2016). However, the divergence of the two marketing approaches for CBTE sustainability, i.e. commercial viability-driven and community

development-driven approaches, as illustrated in this study, explained the CBTE stakeholders' perspectives on the attributes of CBTE sustainability. Indeed, CBTE stakeholders in this study perceived the objectives of commercial viability and community development in a superior–inferior relationship, in which one attribute takes precedence over the other. Thus, this study implies that academic knowledge of CBTE sustainability developed through Indigenous tourism research does not correspond to the perspectives of practitioners.

There are also divergent perspectives among CBTE stakeholders on the issues involved in CBTE collaborative marketing. First, the perspectives on marketing and CBTE sustainability varied by different categories of stakeholders. Indeed, the inconsistencies in perspectives among the stakeholders and their impacts on collaborative efforts have been discussed in the literature of CBT (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2014; Taylor, 2016). In this study, tour operators insisted on the commercial viability-driven marketing approach and added some embryonic ideas about the relevance of the balanced approach. The government perceived the topic of CBTE marketing and sustainability under either the commercial viability-driven approach or the community development approach without any acknowledgement of the balanced approach. At a different scale, the perceptions of NGOs and development agencies regarding CBTE marketing and sustainability stretched over the three approaches. Interestingly, perceptions on CBTE marketing and sustainability from entrepreneurs and co-operatives were limited to their stories of daily operational issues and economic incentives. Second, there was controversy pertaining to the government's intervention level in CBTE collaborative marketing. Numerous studies argue that the government involvement in CBT development is significant (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2014; Truong, 2013; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2010). Although the government's intervention in CBTE collaborative marketing was affirmed as necessary in this study, there was a controversy regarding how extensive the intervention should be. The intervention ranged from the role of an arbitrator in the commercial viability-driven approach to a more engaged role as a facilitator in the community development-driven approach. Third, the governance of social enterprises as a facilitator of CBTE collaborative marketing was vague. With regard to CBT development, social enterprises can be market intermediaries (Von Der Weppen & Cochrane, 2012), and knowledge brokers (Phi et al., 2017). This study arguably advocates for the facilitator role of social enterprises in CBTE collaborative marketing. Nevertheless, it reveals vagueness in the governance of social enterprises to fit the proposed role. Among the investigated NGOs and development agencies, some viewpoints proposed a revolution of social enterprises from local NGOs whereas the others doubted about the proposal's feasibility due to financial difficulties. Likewise, the self-transformation of tour operators to social entrepreneurship received concerns from other tour operators and the community supporters regarding the potential benefit conflicts adhered to this proposed governance.

Conclusion

This study investigates stakeholder engagement in CBTE collaborative marketing for business sustainability. Specifically, collaborative marketing approaches that include crucial stakeholders (tour operators, NGOs, development agencies, the government, local entrepreneurs, and CBTE co-operatives) are advocated. Indeed, three CBTE collaborative marketing approaches are identified and are differentiated regarding the pathways to CBTE sustainability, the perceptions of CBTE marketing, the identification of central linkages in CBTE collaborative networks, and the proposals of collaboration facilitator. The findings from this study also reveal that a CBTE collaborative marketing approach in which the objectives of commercial viability and community development are balanced can lead to the better sustainability of CBTEs. Under this approach, marketing is employed as not a conventional economic tool but a strategic mechanism to achieve the CBTE sustainability. However, for a successful integration of collaborative marketing and CBTE sustainability, there is a need to bridge the theory–practice gap and to reconcile divergent perspectives among CBTE stakeholders. Therefore, this study argues for the significance of a knowledge co-production approach in which researchers and

CBTE stakeholders work together to develop a collaborative marketing approach for the CBTE long-term success.

This study has certain limitations. This study ignores the business life cycle of CBTE development, which may affect perspectives relating to central linkages and facilitators of CBTE collaborative marketing. For instance, the role of a collaboration facilitator may differ for mature CBTEs compared to infant ones. Furthermore, the investigation of CBTEs in Vietnam may not reflect the diverse collaborative marketing alternatives of CBTEs in other parts of the world.

Implications for future research are presented. Particularly, a participatory research approach should be adopted to investigate the process of knowledge co-production between the researchers and CBTE stakeholders and among the CBTE stakeholders regarding CBTE collaborative marketing. In fact, the results of this study represent the first stage of the knowledge co-production process through which diverse perspectives on CBTE collaborative marketing are explored. Following this first stage, possible future research on this topic could include facilitating a platform for knowledge interactions between the researchers and CBTE stakeholders to achieve a compromise of perspectives. A feedback mechanism to evaluate the learning outcomes associated with the knowledge co-production process should be included. Additionally, a comparative study of CBTE collaborative marketing in different political economy contexts is necessary. The investigation would help to specify the typical stakeholder engagement in the development of CBTEs in less-developed communist countries.

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1. Equivalent to US\$0.50.

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